

## Minutes of Branch meeting 08/07/20

95 attended the zoom meeting. No apologies.

**David Moon (Branch President)** introduces the meeting and provides context on current discussions with University Management:

The three campus trades unions (UCU, Unite and Unison) have been invited for talks related to cost savings identified as required by the University. The University has provided an initial financial briefing and is producing a list of proposals identifying potential areas for cost savings, as the basis for discussion, consultation, and negotiation.

The TUs are clear that they need to have seen clear financial figures and not work from hypothetical assumptions. Before any discussion of specific proposals produced by the University can begin, the TUs will need to present those proposals to their memberships to allow for meaningful consultation.

Before this stage, the TUs have made initial appeals to members to feedback on their priorities in the face of 'savings' and to identify any cost-saving opportunities they may have – the purpose in doing so is to make sure members can feedback without being guided by employer proposals from the outset. The UCU survey (found [HERE](#)) is still open, thus far feedback equates to 8% of members. The message at this point can be summarised as: The priorities are (1) Protecting Jobs; (2) Protecting Pay; (3) where cuts/savings are made, there should be a principle of equity, with staff on the most vulnerable contracts protected wherever possible.

### Discussion

**Member A** interjected to suggest the union should say “no” to any communication with management without full costing of figures to begin with. **DM** noted that it was vital to have further financial impact and that issues such as student recruitment in September would be vital knowledge. He appealed to members to hear their thoughts.

**Member B** suggested it would be useful to provide examples of what has been discussed at other universities. **DM** noted that the University of Bath is in a better financial shape than many other institutions, so comparisons cannot be exact. He noted that he had provided links to examples in the email circulated so staff could see those examples. He outlined examples of actions taken at other Universities. He noted that Bath UCU will work with her sister TUs to protect members' interests as best as could be done at all stages.

**Member A** asked if the union was discussion scrapping tuition fees and proposed that this may be worthwhile **DM** noted that UCU's national position was to reject tuition fees, however the union's current focus was on obtaining further government funding and support for Universities, to save jobs given the impact of Covid-19. Tuition fees are not currently part of the conversation at a national level.

**Member C** noted that if the impact of the crisis is predicted to be two years, this would amount to a small time for the University but not for individuals who are made redundant. If redundancies occurred that would be devastating for mid-career academics whose careers would be finished. Also lack of promotions for academics/professional staff would be would have a career/financial impact. It was suggested as a possibility that promotions be allowed and the pay to be back dated at a future date. **Member A** noted that there needed to be clear figures of how much is saved with promotions, as it was probably a minimal amount – the benefit for an individual's status, and thus the University, would be greater than a small financial cost for the University. Promotions paid or not, were key to career development. Greater savings could be made by a pay cut for very senior staff.

**DM** introduced the idea, which came from discussions with UCU branches elsewhere, reduced working hours or a period of unpaid leave for an agreed duration. In the subsequent discussion, positives and negatives were identified: the idea is positive if people want to take the time off or work less hours, but like VES negative in that the missing posts workload are spread elsewhere. The concern here is the guarantee of return to work F/T and will it be the same job and will your original service and terms and condition remain. **Member D** noted that a good workload model practice is needed to determine the rebalancing of workloads that PT and time off work polices will cause. The online teaching as well as face to face teaching will increase workloads. The university will need to work on its workload models to make them realistic. The knock-on effect of time off / PT work will affect staff financially in paying mortgages, career developments, applying for posts elsewhere and long-term employment prospects.

**Member E** raised concern around lecture posts be advertised as full-time basis (36.5 hours/week). Is this feasible as teaching/lecturers are opted out of the European agreement. **DM** asked for the information to be forwarded onto him.

**Member F** raised that there was a 'mapping exercise' taking place in professional services. **DM** was not aware of this but noted that Departmental DoRs were undertaking a mapping exercise that included questions about staffing. It is not clear is such mappings are intended as the basis for identifying staff cuts and clarity was needed. **Member D** raised parenting as an issue for flexible working. **DM** noted that the university emphasises that its strategy would protect the vulnerable and it is presumed parents would be protected from working condition changes due to savings required; however, at this point these were just positive words.

**Member G** raised the VES scheme and savings. **DM** noted that applications are now closed but late allowances are being considered. The last that he heard, there had been 182 applications. A lot of academic applications were in the last few remaining days. It was noted that not all who apply will be agreed for VES as their jobs are essential and would need replacing, so there would be no cost saving. In VES the savings will be calculated to include cases where a backfill may be required (it might be for example that an expensive Professor can be replaced with a cheaper Lecturer, so backfill is not 100%). Members who are denied

VES are essentially being told they are essential and thus if there were subsequent proposals for redundancies post-VES it would be difficult to argue that in their cases. Opening another VES has not been suggested by management but the unions could pursue it in as a possible line of negotiations. HR/management are currently working through the VES applications and hope to be able to send out letters next week (the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup>). Those who are denied VES can appeal.

### **Next Steps**

**DM** outlined the next steps for the discussions with University Management.

On Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June A meeting will be held with HR and all three TUs and their regional officers to discuss the universities proposed strategy. In that meeting there will be discussion of time frames and what it is possible to discuss at what points, depending on what are existing cost-savings and what are still hypotheticals. The university is already putting deadlines out for certain decisions to be made at the end of Jul, but the TUs are clear that it is important that there not be an unnecessary rush. The three TUs are in regular contact and are operating on the same page. Members will be updated as your opinions are essential. It was emphasised we 9the staff) are the University and without us there is no university.

### **AOB.**

**Member H** noted that a formal system was needed to get equipment for home use. Especially hardware and chairs. **DM** noted that this had been discussed with HR who were moving to have systems in place as we move form 'crisis' to a 'new normal' of home working. **A member working in H&S** flagged the existing avenues and provided links in the chat. D&T are aware using your own IT equipment is not ideal and will make it possible to have your work desktops at home soon. More communication is needed from the University about staff collecting chairs, monitors computers etc for home use as this uptake will save the university expenses.